



# Parent-Teen Homework Assignments to Increase Driver Safety

## INTRODUCTION TO HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS & ACTIVITIES

### KEYS to... Becoming a Safe Driver

#### Purpose of Homework Assignments

**Teen driving is deeply rooted in the American & Montana culture, but, unfortunately, driving is an even more high-risk activity for teens than it is for adults. The purpose of Parent-Teen Homework Assignments is for families to ensure that teens show the knowledge, skill, & behaviors for safe driving.**

**ROLE FOR PARENTS:** Parents have a very important role to play in encouraging & ensuring safe teen driving. Your influence is stronger, more immediate, & longer-lasting than all other influences. Your role in the Parent-Teen Homework Assignments is to assess your teen's knowledge, skills, & behaviors related to safe driving.

**ROLE FOR TEENS:** Teens need to fully explain to your parents the concepts & show them the procedures that you have learned in driver education so that your parents can easily follow along. Your role in the Parent-Teen Homework Assignments is to show your parents your knowledge, skills, & behaviors for safe driving.

#### Overview of Homework Assignments

**Parents & teens need to work together to complete all Parent-Teen Homework Assignments. Completing homework assignments may take some time & energy, but the experience will be worth it & the safety impact will be long-lasting!**

**Set-up for Homework Assignments:** There are 5 Parent-Teen Homework Assignments. Each homework assignment has an **Information Sheet** (in the same format as this Introduction) & an **Assignment Sheet** that cover two or three safe driving topics & four or five family activities.

**Completing Homework Assignments:** For each of the 5 Parent-Teen Homework Assignments, parents & teens need to: (1) Read over the Information Sheet provided, (2) fully & thoroughly perform the parent-teen activities listed on the Assignment Sheet, & (3) complete & turn in the Assignment Sheet to your driver education class. Each homework assignment will include all the information that parents need to effectively participate in the activities.

**Grading Homework Assignments:** After completing activities, parents will rate teens' progress on the Assignment Sheet. Grading will be based ONLY on the completion of the activities, not on the actual ratings for teen progress. Thus, all comments, whether they seem good, bad, or indifferent, are welcomed & needed. Such information is important for tracking student progress & providing you with feedback on ways to improve.

**Remember, patience is not only a virtue, it is necessary!** Driving in traffic is very serious business. As your family completes the homework assignments & the required supervised practice required by the state of Montana, remember to REMAIN PATIENT WITH EACH OTHER! This is a new experience for both of parents & teens!

#### Information for: Learning to Be a Safe Driver

##### What is Safe Driving?

**Safe driving means being able to safely navigate roadways & safely interact with other roadway users.**

##### You are not alone!

The purpose of our public roadway system is to manage the flow or movement of traffic. Traffic is anything—vehicles, pedestrians, & even ridden or herded animals—that uses the public roadways for purposes of travel.

##### Driving on public roadways

Driving on public roadways with other traffic is more than just knowing how to operate a vehicle! It requires knowing how to apply the rules of the road & to share the public roadways with other roadway users.

##### Safe driving

Safe driving is more than being able to operate a vehicle. **It means being able to safely navigate the public roadways while safely interacting with other roadway users.** To increase driver safety, graduated driver licensing (GDL) policies, driver education, & families must actively promote positive attitudes & safe driving behaviors in all new drivers.

##### How Do You Learn to be a Safe Driver?

**Learning to be a safe driver begins with knowledge & skill acquisition & then grows through experience.**

##### Safe driving

Safe driving is a result of **competence**. Competence is being qualified or having the ability to perform in a specific role. Competence is a result of knowledge & skill acquisition & extensive practice or experience, all related to a target outcome—in this case, the target outcome is SAFE DRIVING.

##### Knowledge & skill acquisition

Driver education courses provide the technical information, knowledge, & skills that are necessary to understand how to be a competent, safe driver. But, knowledge & skill acquisition are not sufficient to create competent, safe drivers—it is **ONLY THE BEGINNING**.

##### Experience

Competence grows through extensive experience & the extent to which an individual can learn in, & adapt to, varying situations. GDL policies provide the extended time period for supervised practice driving, but parents must provide the supervised practice & ensure that teen driving competence grows.

### Phases for Becoming a Competent, Safe Driver

**There are several phases involved in learning to drive before anyone reaches “competent” status.**

#### “Competent” status

- ♦ Learning any complex behavior that requires skilled performance—such as safe driving—happens in phases.
- ♦ Think about really competent people in different fields such as mechanics, surgeons, & skiers. For example, a surgeon must first learn the “book” information, then watch other surgeons operate, then be watched by other surgeons as they operate, then perform low-risk operations independently, & only after showing success will they be able to do complex operations independently.
- ♦ Safe drivers go through similar phases: learning knowledge & skills in driver education, watching & having supervised practice with mentors, gaining independent driving experience under lower-risk conditions, & then obtaining a full privilege license.

**Performing driving behaviors correctly a couple of times does not mean competence! Competence means always performing driving behaviors correctly in many different kinds of driving situations.**

#### Phases for learning to drive

No one becomes a competent, safe driver overnight! The phases for becoming a competent, safe driver (see the handout, **Understanding the Road to Safe Driving**, that accompanies this Introduction) include the following:

- ♦ **Novice (beginner)** Shows weak driving skills, must use full concentration, & is easily distracted
- ♦ **Nearing Proficient (advanced beginner):** Shows inconsistent performance & must use conscious effort
- ♦ **Proficient (nearing competent):** Shows more consistent performance, but still uses conscious effort
- ♦ **Competent:** Shows consistent performance & behavior is largely automatic

**Becoming a competent driver is a long process, not a goal that can be achieved in weeks or months. It usually takes a year or more of independent driving to get to this level.**

### Activities for Becoming a Competent, Safe Driver

**Parent-Teen Homework Assignments will have activities related to safe driving knowledge, skills, & practice.**

#### The ONLY ROAD to competent driving is time & practice

- ♦ **Time:** It is clear that “mastering” any highly complex behavior that requires skilled performance—such as safe driving—takes a substantial investment of time. No exceptions to this rule have yet to be discovered!
- ♦ **Practice:** Practice is not just about the time spent, it is about the level of practice that is deliberate & guided. Practice **MUST** (a) include varying levels & degrees of knowledge & skills in varying situations, (b) include the identification of any errors & ways to remedy the errors, & (c) be guided by ONE main goal. That goal for both teens & parents needs to be **safe driving**—not independence, status, or reduced dependence for transportation.

#### Types of activities within homework assignments

- ♦ The 5 Parent-Teen Homework Assignments will have a combination of activities that may include (a) a **family discussion**, in which teens & parents talk about a safety topic, (b) a **family exercise**, in which parents & teens use a handout or follow other specific instructions, (c) a **vehicle-related activity**, in which a vehicle is needed but there is no driving involved, and/or (d) a **driving activity**, in which parents & teens drive around in the vehicle & gather safety information.
- ♦ The progression of activities within each homework assignment follows the line of thinking that when learning you should first show knowledge & skill in controlled situations & then practice in structured and/or semi-structured situations.

#### The role of supervised practice

- ♦ There are significant risks associated with teen practice driving because practice requires exposure to varying driving situations & teens do not easily adapt to new driving situations.
- ♦ Therefore, it is necessary to have an experienced person there with teens during practice to (a) guide them through new situations & (b) identify any errors in driving attitudes or behaviors & help correct them before unsafe habits become “automatic.”
- ♦ Montana requires 50 hours (including 10 hours at night) so keep a **Schedule for Supervised Driving** (see this handout accompanying this Introduction) to keep track of hours.

#### Assess teens’ safe driving

- ♦ The homework assignments & activities will allow families to assess teens’ knowledge, skills, & behaviors related to a range of safe driving behaviors. See the list of these safe driving behaviors on the **Keep Track of Teen Driver Progress** handout (which accompanies this Introduction) and use this handout to keep track of progress!

### *Family Activities to Increase Teen Driver Safety: For Now & In the Future*

**Families should complete parent-teen homework assignments, talk about driver safety OFTEN, & set expectations for driver safety EARLY.**

Each of the 5 Parent-Teen Homework Assignments will have this section of information that will do the following:

- ♦ List the types of activities covered in the Assignment Sheet.
- ♦ List topics that parents & teens should talk about now & periodically in the future.
- ♦ Suggest that families **MAKE CLEAR** certain safe driving expectations & set probable consequences for violating those safe driving expectations.

## Understand the Road to Safe Driving

Phases for Learning to Drive	DESCRIPTION						
	GDL Phase	Knowledge	Skill	Performance	Adaptability	Distractions	Supervised Practice
<b>Novice (Beginner)</b>	Driver's Education & supervised practice	Shows weak knowledge retrieval related to safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows weak driving skills in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows very inconsistent driver performance in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Must use full concentration to safely navigate roadways & interact with other roadway users	Is easily distracted by both internal & external distractions	<p>Practice is the only way to eventually gain mastery. It takes years of regular driving to become a competent driver.</p> <p>Meanwhile, novices <b>MUST</b> have regular supervised practice in order to assess progress toward safe driving &amp; have any mistakes corrected before they become unsafe habits.</p>
<b>Nearing Proficient (Advanced Beginner)</b>	Supervised practice & restricted independent driving	Shows improved knowledge retrieval related to safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows improved driving skills in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows inconsistent driver performance in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Uses conscious effort to safely navigate roadways & interact with other roadway users	Is easily distracted by both internal & external distractions	<p>Practice is the only way to eventually gain mastery. It takes years of regular driving to become a competent driver.</p> <p>Meanwhile, supervised practice is necessary in order to assess progress toward safe driving &amp; have any mistakes corrected before they become unsafe habits.</p>
<b>Proficient (Nearing competent)</b>	Restricted independent driving & full privilege license	Shows adequate knowledge retrieval related to safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows adequate driving skills in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows more consistent driver performance in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Uses conscious effort to safely navigate roadways & interact with other roadway users	Can be distracted by both internal & external distractions	<p>Practice is the only way to eventually gain mastery. It takes years of regular driving to become a competent driver.</p> <p>Periodically "spot check" to make sure that safe driving behaviors are maintained &amp; unsafe driving behaviors are extinguished.</p>
<b>Competent</b>	Full privilege license	Shows strong knowledge retrieval related to safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows strong driving skills in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Shows consistent driver performance in safely navigating roadways & interacting with other roadway users	Behaviors to safely navigate roadways & interact with other roadway users are automatic	Less likely to be distracted by both internal & external distractions	<p>Practice is the only way to eventually gain mastery. It takes years of regular driving to become a competent driver.</p> <p>Periodically "spot check" to make sure that safe driving behaviors are maintained &amp; unsafe driving behaviors are extinguished.</p>



## Keep Track of Teen Driver Progress

**Directions:** Rate teen driver safety knowledge, skill, performance, & adaptability to date for the following safe driving behaviors. Repeat this assessment every 2 months to track teen safe driving progress. Use the following rating system:

0 = not enough information to judge at this time ~ 1 = needs improvement ~ 2 = fair ~ 3 = good

SAFE DRIVING BEHAVIORS <i>Remember, performing a behavior correctly a couple of times does not mean competence! Competence means always performing the behavior correctly in many different kinds of driving situations.</i>	Date	Knowledge <i>Knows the information related to how &amp; why</i>	Skill <i>Has the ability to use knowledge &amp; maneuver the vehicle</i>	Performance <i>Safely navigates roadways &amp; interacts with roadway users</i>	Adaptability <i>Performs well in various situations &amp; under various conditions</i>
<b>Prepared:</b> Adjusts seat, steering wheel, & mirrors, & wears seat belt					
<b>Positive attitude:</b> Is a courteous driver					
<b>Follows laws:</b> Always follows traffic laws & traffic control devices. Wears seat belt, stays within the speed limit, determines right-of-way, never drives after using alcohol or other drugs, etc.					
<b>Starts &amp; stops:</b> "Smooth" starts & stops					
<b>Steering control:</b> "Smooth" steering					
<b>Vision control:</b> Constantly searches driving environment (mirrors & head turning) looking for signs, vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.					
<b>Blindspots:</b> Checks "blindspots" by looking over the shoulder before turning or changing lanes					
<b>Speed control:</b> Stays within the speed limit & chooses a speed that is appropriate for traffic conditions, weather conditions, road conditions, etc.					
<b>Attention:</b> Constantly monitors lane position, speed control, & mirrors					
<b>Communication:</b> Uses turn signals when turning or changing lanes					
<b>Intersections:</b> Looks ahead to intersections to determine what is there even before getting there					
<b>Right-of-Way:</b> Watches for right-of-way situations & determines appropriate rules					
<b>Turns:</b> Signals, searches, & keeps speeds fluid through the turn. The left turn is a wide, sweeping turn at a fairly regular speed. The right turn is a tighter, slower turn.					
<b>Gap Selection:</b> Chooses an appropriate "gap" when entering traffic or entering or turning onto another street.					
<b>Accelerates/Merges:</b> Smoothly gets up or down to the appropriate speed while maintaining lane position. On highways, uses the on/off ramps to help build or decrease speed.					
<b>Following Distance:</b> Keeps a safe following distance based on speed, weather conditions, traffic conditions, road conditions, etc.					
<b>Night Driving:</b> Slows & constantly searches the driving environment when driving under low light or dark conditions					
<b>Wet conditions:</b> Slows & constantly searches the driving environment when driving under wet or icy conditions					

\* Contact your teen's driver education instructor if you would like more of these handouts to assess teen driving



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